

In immature specimens of *reichenbachii*, such as the Liberian example, yellow feathers predominate on the throat and upper breast. Scattered among these are found glossy, blue-black feathers typical of the adult plumage, some completely in sheath as would be expected if the bird were undergoing its first prebasic moult. However, yellow feathers typical of the immature plumage are also found which contain varying amounts of the glossy blue-black pigmentation, presumably reflecting the irregularity of the physiology causing the transition to the adult plumage.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Alexander L. Peal, the Head of the Wildlife & National Parks Service of the Republic of Liberia's Forestry Development Authority for his cooperation and assistance during the course of this work. We are also indebted to Stuart Keith for his advice and helpful comments on the manuscript.

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Addresses: Dr W. Parker Cane, Department of Ornithology, American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, NY 10024 USA; Michael F. Carter, 14898 East Pacific Place, Aurora, CO 80014, USA.

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The validity of *Kupeornis* Serle

by J. P. Vande weghe

Received 15 July 1987

According to Hall & Moreau (1970) the genus *Lioptilus* comprises 4 species. The type species is the Bush Blackcap *L. nigricapillus*, originally described in 1818 as *Turdus nigricapillus* Vieillot. It occurs in south-eastern Africa from Eastern Cape to Swaziland, where it inhabits montane forest and adjacent scrubby hillsides of the evergreen mistbelt (Maclean 1985). Following Sclater (1930) the name *Lioptilus* is pre-occupied and *Lioptilornis* Oberholzer, should be preferred. *Lioptilus* has,

however, currently been retained (Chapin 1953, White 1962, Hall & Moreau 1970).

In 1908 the Red-collared Blackcap *L. rufocinctus* Rothschild, was described from the Central African Highlands, where its distribution is restricted to Nyungwe Forest in southwestern Rwanda (Schouteden 1966) and to Itombwe Forest and Mount Kabobo in eastern Zaire (Verheyen 1947, Prigogine 1960a).

The third species is the White-throated Mountain Babbler *L. gilberti* Serle, originally described in 1949 as *Kupeornis gilberti* and subsequently merged into the genus *Lioptilus* by White (1962) and Hall & Moreau (1970). Its distribution is restricted to Mount Kupé, the Rumpi Hills, forest at Foto near Dschang and the Obudu Plateau in the Cameroon Highlands (Stuart & Jensen 1986).

The last species to have been discovered, in 1949 also, is Chapin's Flycatcher-babbler *L. chapini* Schouteden, also originally placed in the genus *Kupeornis*, but transferred to *Lioptilus* by Chapin (1953). It occurs in the Central African Highlands, where it inhabits montane forests West of Lake Albert, Lake Edward and Lake Kivu. The populations of Mount Nyombe and the Kahuzi-Biega area have been separated subspecifically from the nominate race as *nyombensis* (Prigogine 1960b) and those of western Itombwe as *kalindei* (Prigogine 1971). Mayr (1957) and White (1962) have included *chapini* in *rufocinctus*, but since *kalindei* and *rufocinctus* overlap (Prigogine 1971, 1980), *chapini* and *rufocinctus* have to be regarded as good species. Hall & Moreau (1970) consider *rufocinctus*, *chapini* and *gilberti* as allospecies of one superspecies, with *gilberti* as the most divergent member. About *nigricapillus* they expressed confidence that it is fairly closely related to *rufocinctus*, since both have "a narrow edging of black feathers round the eye, merging above the eye into the black of the crown". They suggest that *Parophasma gallinieri* from Ethiopia should also perhaps be included in the same genus *Lioptilus* but in this case preferred to wait for more information from comparative field studies. However, Wolters (1980) retains the name *Lioptilus* for *nigricapillus* only, and considers all the other 3 species belong to *Kupeornis*.

In fact the relation between these species is not easily understood, since most of them are very poorly known. The best known, *nigricapillus*, was initially considered a thrush, whereas until recently McLachlan & Liversidge (1978) considered it to be a bulbul, Pycnonotidae. On the other hand, *rufocinctus* was included in the Muscicapidae by Macworth-Pread & Grant (1955) and *chapini* still retains its very misleading English name "Flycatcher-babbler", as sometimes does *rufocinctus*. Indeed, very little has been written about the 3 tropical Central African species, and very few ornithologists have seen them alive.

According to Maclean (1985) the Bush Blackcap (*nigricapillus*) is usually a silent bird, but utters a "variety of bulbul-like notes in lively song in summer" and has a "fairly loud guttural *burgg* alarm note". According to Newman (1983) this song is quite similar to that of the Black-eyed Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*, but more "liquid and varied". A good recording of the song of *nigricapillus* is given by Gillard (1985). This species lives solitarily, in pairs or small groups, and is quiet and unob-

trusive, creeping about in the middle layer of forest edge or low down in scrub. It has a direct, somewhat undulating flight. As mentioned above, it has been considered until recently to belong to the Pycnonotidae and its name in Afrikaans, Rooibek Tiptol, indicates a superficial resemblance with the genus *Pycnonotus*. Newman (1983) and Lockwood (*in* Maclean 1985) both depict this species in a very upright posture, typical for *Pycnonotus barbatus*.

The Red-collared Blackcap (*rufocinctus*) is a very different bird. It is common in Nyungwe Forest, where I have seen it frequently since 1972. It occurs between 1700 and 2700 m in moist montane forest, most frequently in dense forest stands, where it inhabits the mid stratum and upper canopy. In the higher altitudes of its altitudinal distribution it also visits more open valley forest, where it can be seen at lower levels of the vegetation. This species always occurs in flocks of up to 15 birds and is very obtrusive, continually uttering harsh chattering notes, not unlike those of *Turdoides* species, and often calling in chorus. It is not really shy, but is very active and continually moves around, never staying for long in the same place. It feeds almost exclusively among large masses of epiphytic mosses, ferns and orchids, often hanging with its head down, pecking and probing with some force. Its movements are very acrobatic and in some ways recall those of *Sitta* spp. The tail is constantly moved up and down. The species seems to be quite aggressive and interactions between individuals in the same group are frequent. The black crown feathers are often erected to form a short crest. During active display the tail is spread and erected vertically above the back. It sometimes associates with mixed-species bird parties, but most frequently with the White-headed Wood Hoopoe *Phoeniculus bollei*, which forages in a similar habitat. The flight of *rufocinctus* is identical to that of *Turdoides* species, with spread, drooping tail, alternating with periods of active fluttering and glides, but only over short distances. I could never locate a nest, but nest-building (April and May), mating (May, June and July) and feeding of recently fledged juveniles (June and August) occurs inside the flock, which seems to be much reduced in size at this time, however, and seldom exceeds 5-6 birds.

Of Chapin's Flycatcher-babbler (*chapini*) I have only very limited personal experience, but what I could hear and see of it on the western slopes of Mount Kahuzi in August 1984 was not different from *rufocinctus*, though the voice is somewhat higher pitched. The English name of this bird is clearly inappropriate, since it was never seen flycatching.

Of the White-throated Mountain Babbler (*gilberti*) I have no personal experience at all, but according to Stuart & Jensen (1986) its behaviour is very similar to that of *rufocinctus*. It inhabits tall mature montane forest, where it travels through the canopy and mid-stratum in noisy flocks of up to 12 birds. It is mainly insectivorous and feeds most of the time in mosses, epiphytes and bark crevices, often head-down in the manner of a nuthatch. The call is an explosive *chook*, usually a single note but occasionally up to 4 in rapid succession. A flock of birds will often make a harsh concerted chatter (Serle 1954, Stuart & Jensen 1986).

From these few notes it is apparent that the 3 Central African montane species are quite closely related. As far as *gilberti* is concerned, however,

Serle (1949) has already stated that it is not closely related to *nigricapillus*, and it is evident that *rufocinctus* and *chapini* are also very distant from this species. Consequently, the genus *Lioptilus* should contain one species only, *nigricapillus*. Up to this point the classification of Wolters (1980) seems to be right.

For the other 3 species, all canopy-frequenting, another generic name has to be given. These birds behave as typical babblers, and are probably quite closely related to the Capuchin Babbler *Phyllanthus atripennis*, a similarity which Verheyen (1947) stressed when he included *rufocinctus* in *Phyllanthus*. Serle (1949) also wrote that *gilberti* recalls the Capuchin Babbler in its actions, loud calls and close gregariousness. In their structure, type and pattern of coloration, as well as in some of their habits, these 3 species are closely similar, *gilberti* being perhaps intermediate between *rufocinctus* and *chapini* to the east and *atripennis* to the west. Possibly, all the latter 4 species could be merged in *Phyllanthus*. On the other hand the Capuchin Babbler *P. atripennis* is a heavier bird, living essentially in the understorey of the forest and climbing into the mid-stratum along tangled masses of creepers, never showing the acrobatic manoeuvres of the 3 canopy species, and in its foraging actions behaving more like a typical member of the genus *Turdoides*.

In the absence of more observations on display, vocalisations and breeding, the name *Kupeornis* Serle for *rufocinctus*, *chapini* and *gilberti* seems to be appropriate, an arrangement which is also followed by Wolters (1980). The first 2 species, inhabiting the Central African Highlands, have to be considered as allospecies of the same superspecies, while the last one, inhabiting the Cameroons, is probably more distantly related. All 3 species, however, are specialised canopy babblers, largely dependent on lush epiphytic growth and consequently restricted to some of the wettest montane forests of tropical Africa. The English generic name Mountain Babbler seems to be the most appropriate.

The last problem, in my opinion, is the systematic position of *Lioptilus nigricapillus*. If it could be proved that this species really belongs to the *Timaliidae*, then its position within this family should be examined again, since it is not clear that Wolters is right to place *Lioptilus* just after *Kupeornis*.

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Address: Dr J. P. Vande weghe, BP 931, Kigali, Rwanda.

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The relationships of the African warblers *Apalis binotata* and *A. (b.) personata*

by M. P. S. Irwin

Received 17 July 1987

The Masked Apalis *Apalis binotata* Reichenow is generally accepted as being divisible into 3 races, 2 of which are well marked. A lowland form, *A. b. binotata*, occurs confluent in forest, in Cameroon, northern Angola and from western Uganda to the base of Mt Elgon and to northwestern Tanzania. It is replaced by *A. b. personata* Sharpe in the highlands of eastern Zaïre, from west of Lake Edward on the Lendu Plateau south to Mt Kabobo, the Nyungwe Forest in Rwanda and in southwestern Uganda on the Rwenzori Range, the Impenetrable Forest and Kigesi. Another less well marked form nearest to *personata*, *A. b. marungensis* Chapin, occurs above 1800 m in the Marungu Highlands in southeast Zaïre.

Lowland *binotata* and montane *personata* (with *marungensis*) differ considerably in colour and pattern of the head (Fig. 1); otherwise they are rather alike. They are also known to replace one another abruptly and without intergradation where their ranges meet, and the highland form is larger. Despite this, they are treated as conspecific by Chapin (1953), Schouteden (1954), Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1955), White (1962), Hall & Moreau (1970), Britton *et al.* (1980), Wolters (1980) and Traylor *in* Mayr & Cottrell (1986).